

A Day at Ravensthorpe Reservoir

When the diary parts and the weather forecast is 'do-able', then there's only 1 thing an angler can do. So Chris Hollick and myself set off early (*no surprise to those who know me*) for a boat trip to Ravensthorpe Reservoir in Northamptonshire. I have fished at Ravensthorpe several times in recent years in April, having been invited by another fishing club. I have found that, even with the sort of weather that would keep many fly fisherman at home (including a very strong easterly and full sun all day!) the buzzer fishing can be brilliant. It is an intimate venue, with a sprinkling of enormous fish. Last year, 2 of the club members boated fish of 11 pounds, which were caught on small flies. Although the forecast wasn't great, with a stiff southerly all day, *I had to get out..*

The buzzer season was not yet in full swing, and catches had been patchy, and 'OK' according to the Ranger. We moved along the dam, and stopped short of the corner 'hot-spot' where a boat had already taken up position. 'Black buzzers on a floating line' was the advice, and this is how we started (well, the black buzzers bit anyway, as I started with a slow intermediate, due to the chop). The power of the 'tractor current' along the bed of a reservoir directly counter to the surface water, always amazes me. Once the line has drifted with the surface waves, wobbling as it goes, it can then move even faster in the opposite direction once it has sunk beneath the surface. This flow of water is what the fish will be working, picking off the drifting, hatching buzzers. I was soon into my first fish on, you guessed, a size 12 black buzzer. I thought it was going to be a great day, but the next fish proved elusive. When it did come, I despatched and spooned it to see what food items were about. The bulk of the stomach contents was made up of black buzzers – *but they weren't black!* Studying them through my *Hookpoint* magnifier, we could see that the body segments were more dun-coloured, but the microscopic film of gas under the shuck made them look lighter. In between the segments (the 'rib') was black. *If you don't look, you don't see...*

I don't like to spend too much time moving, but we moved along a bit, down the tree-lined bank away from the dam. Most of the boats were down the far end in the shallower water, but Chris and I both hate 'elbows' so we stayed an unsociable distance from the jostling throng. With the aid of my binoculars I could see that other anglers were catching and it was tempting to follow, however, I was catching regularly, but with long intervals between takes, so we decided to keep our solitude. Chris, was less fortunate with buzzers, and decided to put on a lure for a while to see what was in the deep water near the dam. At last he exclaimed, 'I'm in!' and his rod took on a serious curve. He battled away, never quite getting the fish near enough to the surface to get a good look. It was plain that it was big, and it led him a merry dance. After fighting it for what seemed ages, disaster – the hook pulled out! *Oh crumbs....*

I had caught 8 on buzzers, but in search of a break from the wind at our backs, and curious to see if there were any fish rising in the slacks, we migrated over to the opposite side. *Was that a fish topping?...A few buzzers were emerging.* Some fish were moving into a slack over by some trees, so we thought we'd see if we could snare one or two. I think it was me who caught the first, on a rusty Bob's Bits, but Chris was soon into a good fish on a fly he had created himself.

'what did you catch that on, Chris?'

'a Black Abba'

'*What?! – describe it!*'

'Black hackle dry, with black body and metallic blue rib'

'fair enough!....'

Chris had another nice fish, and I got snubbed a couple of times. Conditions were not easy, as the water was gin-clear, and it was breezy of variable speed and direction, and worse – while we were pre-occupied, another boat spotted a better position and quietly motored next to us to better access the fish as they appeared. Most of the fish that showed were out of range against the wind between us. The neighbouring boat then had a steady stream of fish to dry fly. They were clearly more experienced than us and probably regulars who knew the water well. I have no doubt their fly boxes were also better equipped for the occasion. But we had had a good time anyway, with no regrets. As the cool breeze turned cold at the end of the afternoon, we decided to call it a day.

Roll-on the warmer weather and the next trip!